AGGRESSIVE DRIVING (ROAD RAGE)

ACTUAL INCIDENT

A 29 year old man was shot to death, an apparent victim of road rage. According to newspaper accounts, he had a reputation for never backing down from a fight.

The man and his half brother were heading home from a plumbing job when the trouble began. Apparently, three men in another car zoomed in front of their car. These men started hurling profanities and flashing obscene gestures at the brothers, who returned the insults.

Things escalated until a gun was pulled. Rather than backing down, the man got out of his car and began walking toward the gunman. Two shots rang out, missing the man who then continued to walk toward the gunman until he was shot and killed.

INCIDENT QUESTIONS

What comments do you have about this incident?

What could have been done?

Have you ever felt this way while driving?

***According to the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, incidents of aggressive driving have increased by 7% every year since 1990; however, few courts mandate anger management treatment for traffic offenders.**

FIVE ZONES OF AGGRESSIVE DRIVING

THE UNFRIENDLY ZONE - Example: closing ranks to deny someone entering your lane because you're frustrated or upset.

HOSTILE ZONE - Example: Tailgating to pressure another driver to go faster or get out of the way.

VIOLENT ZONE - Example: Making visible obscene gestures at another driver.

LESS MAYHEM ZONE - Example: Pursuing other cars in a chase because of provocation or insult.

MAJOR MAYHEM ZONE - Example: Getting out of the car and beating or battering someone as a result of a road exchange.

Zones established by Dr. Leon James, University of Hawaii

DO AGGRESSIVE DRIVERS SEE THEMSELVES AS AGGRESSIVE?

- **Drivers who consider themselves as almost perfect in excellence (with no room to improve) also confessed to significantly more aggressiveness than drivers who see themselves as still improving.**

- **2 out of 3 drivers still insist on seeing themselves as near perfect drivers with almost no room to improve.**

- **Aggressive drivers see "the other guy" as the problem and thus do not look at their own aggressive driving behavior.**

WHAT CAUSES AGGRESSIVE DRIVING BEHAVIOR?

- **Many psychologists see anger as the root cause of the problem.**

- **It is ultimately our emotional state, our stress levels and our thinking patterns that either cause us to drive aggressively or lead us to be the victims of others.**

- **Driving under the influence of impaired emotions, especially anger.**

- **It is a behavioral choice that drivers make.**

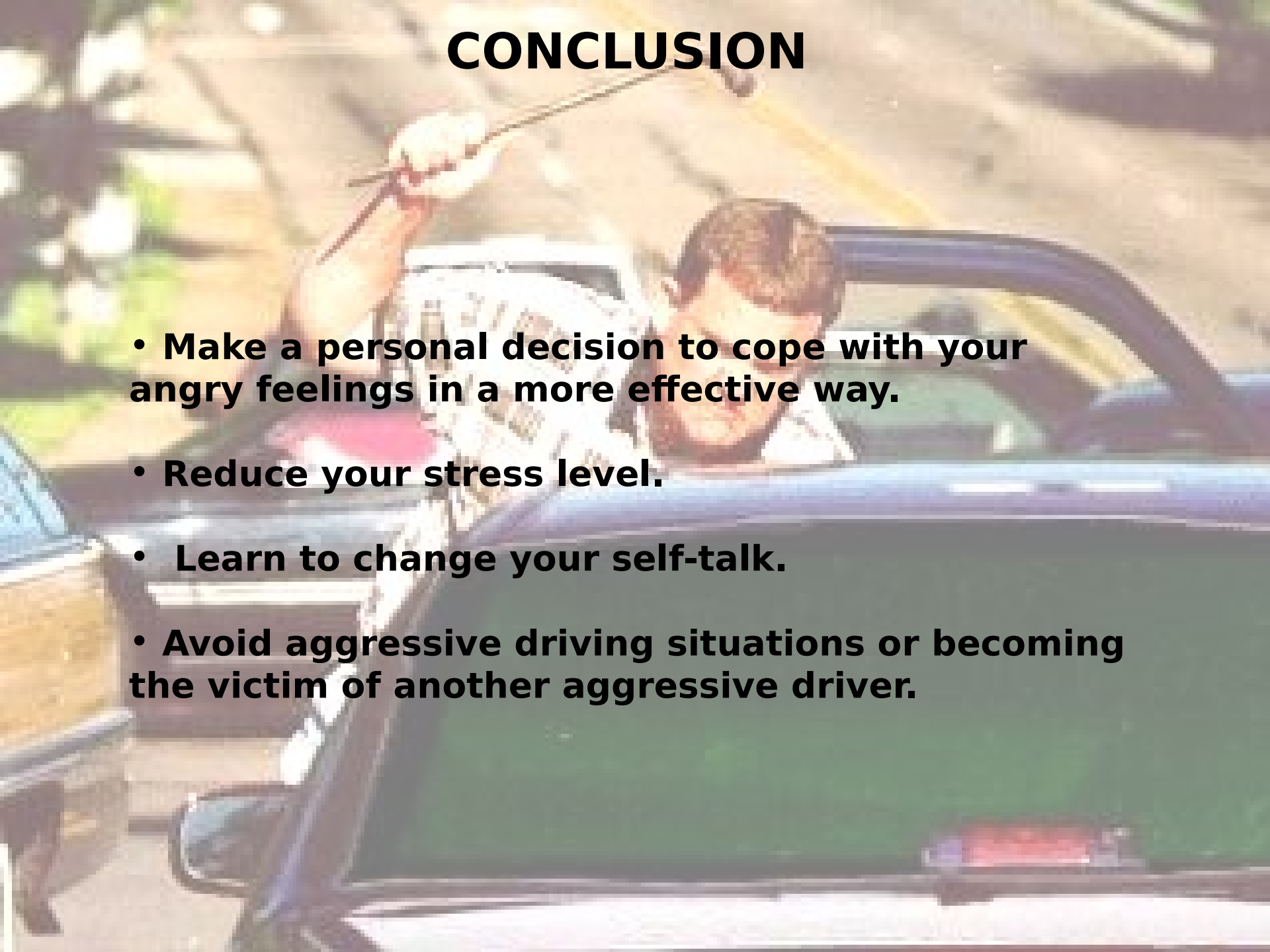
- **Some drivers do not know how to deal effectively with angry feelings and how to cope with the situation.**

TWO WAYS TO COPE WITH IMPAIRED DRIVING EMOTIONS

1. REDUCE YOUR STRESS. Driving is emotionally challenging because unexpected things happen constantly with which we must cope. We often drive under the pressure of time, or the pressure of congestion and delays which add to our general stress level. Suggestions include listening to relaxing music or educational tapes on the road, leaving 15 minutes sooner, and getting up earlier so you are less rushed.

2. CHANGE YOUR PERSPECTIVE with different self-talk. As a result of earlier life experiences, we all have "automatic" thoughts that are generated by our mind when certain "triggers" occur when driving. We can change our perspective and thus our angry feelings by consciously changing this "self-talk." For instance, if cut off in traffic think something like ...that "jerk" may actually be a single mother who worked nine hours that day and is rushing home to cook dinner, help with homework, do the laundry and spend a few precious moments with her children."

CONCLUSION



- **Make a personal decision to cope with your angry feelings in a more effective way.**
- **Reduce your stress level.**
- **Learn to change your self-talk.**
- **Avoid aggressive driving situations or becoming the victim of another aggressive driver.**